

# INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF EUGENIC ORGANIZATIONS

## Report of the 1936 Conference

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OF recent years the I.F.E.O. has only met every two years, but as compensation the plan is followed of holding a Conference at the same time. This year the Dutch Federation of Eugenics acted as host. Arrangements were made with a hotel at Schweningen (which may be described as the Dutch Brighton) both to provide meeting rooms and to put up those attending. This is the second time that this plan has been followed and it is generally voted as desirable. At these meetings work is pretty concentrated. The saving of time on journeys to a meeting room is all to the good; further, meal times and odd minutes are doubly valuable when those who want to meet each other are all on the spot and can use every odd minute profitably.

This meeting was memorable as being the second only when the Federation was accorded the honour of a public reception. On Wednesday, July 15th, before work began, the Minister of Education and Deputies of the Town Council of the Hague received the I.F.E.O. in the beautiful New Museum. Dr. Waardenburg (President of the Dutch Federation) gave an interesting lecture on the origin of eugenics, of which a summary will be printed in the Report. This was followed by refreshments; and then guides showed the treasures of the museum, which is most beautiful in its modern arrangement.

There was only one other period for entertainment. On the Sunday afternoon an improvised outing was arranged to the Franz Hals Museum in Haarlem. In a bad week this was fortunately a sunny afternoon, so that the little old city was looking its best. Professor Rodenwaldt, familiar with Anglo-Saxon weaknesses, halted the return journey, in the market place for tea, and with the

energetic Dutch organizer, Dr. Sanders, by imperative telephone brought the organist of the Cathedral Church a quarter of an hour before his time, to play a fugue on what is one of the most beautiful of old organs. So the fortunate visitors listened to one of the famous Dutch carillons as they sat in the old Square for tea and then had a taste of beautiful music in the sun-flooded Cathedral.

The Conferences for the most part centred round the work of Research Committees, and a brief account will be given in order of day to day sequence. The first day was devoted to reports from different countries, which were summarized by Dr. Bijlmer in the morning. In the afternoon short papers were given on methods and social impact of sterilization practice in those six States which have laws for eugenic sterilization. Naturally much interest focused at this meeting on the eugenic plans of the new Germany. It was a great opportunity. The President of the Federation has been a chief adviser to the Government, and he did great honour to the meeting in bringing (in addition to most of the German members) Dr. Ruttke, who controls Popular Health Instruction, and Dr. Astel, who directs eugenic work for Thuringia, generally acknowledged as the model province. Both of these read papers and answered questions. This was a revelation to those unfamiliar with the Reich policy. It became clear that positive eugenics in actual practice looms larger than the much-talked-of sterilization. More than this, public assistance has been wholly reorganized on biological principles; "want" is no longer an excuse for indiscriminate reproduction; the stock of the family as regards health and capacity determines whether

assistance is based on the hope of a growing family, or on the needs of the individual who, himself a burden, is likely to generate fresh burdens according to laws of probability. Questioners sought to establish regimentation as a controlling factor, only to be told that in effect individual tastes and popular feeling were given wide scope under the present experiments.

It may be well to bring out here some points which will not appear in a printed report, throwing light on the strangely varying attitudes of different countries. As example: it emerged that castration of sex offenders is being widely demanded in Holland, while sterilization is still regarded with distaste and suspicion. Denmark, originally most cautious to avoid compulsion in sterilization, has now made this as well as other regulations for the feeble-minded, compulsory for that category. At the same time administrators in Denmark take the utmost care to use their powers with reserve until public confidence has been built up. Marriage laws are easily promulgated in Scandinavia; in Germany (supposed land of drastic legislation) advisory marriage bureaux are paving the way with careful and paternal help towards legislation, which may be withheld for some time yet.

Feeble-mindedness was the subject of the next day's work. Two years before, at Zürich, grading and methods of assessment had been discussed. Now the points at issue were the search for diagnosis of different types with the added endeavour to find indications by types of genetic transmission of different forms, where these do not appear recognizable by outward stigmata. Dr. Torsten Sjoegren gave further data on the group he described in the *Annals of Eugenics*. Dr. Lionel Penrose gave a paper on his recent work, and Dr. Brugger presented a statistical analysis of the cases coming under his observation in Basel. This will not be given in full in the Report as it will shortly appear elsewhere.\*

Genetics of mental disorders was surveyed by Dr. Luxemburger, who also gave an

account of his recent investigations in prognosis. Prognosis in epilepsy was taken by Dr. Konrad, mainly based on twin studies.

Other psychological work was relegated to Monday; and Sunday, which should have been a free day, gave opportunity for discussions which had been crowded out earlier. One important paper acted as a bridge between abnormal and normal psychology, namely, a paper by Dr. Stümpfl, who is reviewing criminal twins. His findings look at present as if they would lie halfway between the conclusions of Lange and recent Dutch workers.

It must be confessed that pressure of work disorganized this meeting. Vigorous discussion and a clamour for papers not originally planned, brought the programme into sad confusion and only enthusiasm and the fact that practically everyone was housed on the same spot, made it possible to carry all this work over without a break-up of the party.

The Standardization Committee for mental measurement dominated the psychology day. Dr. Kinder described co-operative work in new tests applied on aments in New York, on Indians and on Mayas. Dr. W. Stephenson did good work for the Committee in throwing open the plan of the British group, now under way, to any in Europe who might care to co-operate. He also gave a paper on the plan he has evolved for the use of current tests in discriminating "types," the essence of the work being that many tests are applied to one person. The statistical method which he adopts brings out personality and intelligence type. It is likely that when the technique becomes familiar, this method will prove most fruitful in comparative studies, cultural and racial.

Later he demonstrated the use of visual discrimination tests, using those adapted by Dr. John Raven from the Fortes's tests. Those present cordially responded to the suggestion that they should experiment with the use of these tests. One of the objects of the present group-work is to standardize tests by comparing results of different

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\* In *Zeitschrift für die gesammte Neurologie*.

workers where possible on material that has already been subjected to other well-known methods. Although, at the end of the Conference, the number was small, this was undoubtedly a very useful meeting. Dr. Stephenson is circulating a report in his periodical bulletin.

If one point can be picked out as of special interest it would be the paper and demonstrations of Dr. Hanhart of Zürich. His paper on mutations in man described the work he has done in tracing to their source some stocks with congenital defects in Switzerland. His work is in some ways comparable to the studies of Torsten Sjöegren in Sweden. In both countries the parish registers have been kept for so long with care that family relationships can be worked out in all classes, often well into the seventeenth century. The published report will unfortunately give an inadequate idea of the magnitude and interest of this work which can only emerge when the pedigree charts are seen, and these, unfortunately, would be too expensive to reproduce here.

Dr. Hanhart's paper was given on the day allotted to mutations and selection. Professor Sirks opened with a theoretical survey of mutations in general. Professor Gates followed with a paper, richly illustrated, on mutations in the evening primrose. Hanhart's first demonstration only served to whet our appetites, and until he took down his charts and went away he was employed every free minute with groups of specialists going over various points.

Later the question of selection dominated the programme. In this section Dr. Robinson of the American Eugenics Research Association gave an interesting and depressing study of the effective fertility of graduates in the American Universities of highest standing. Dr. Brugger contributed an equally depressing series of figures from the other end of the scale. A comprehensive study from Basle of families in which oligophrenics occur,

shows this as the most fertile part of the community.

It may be of interest to eugenists in general to hear something of the business transacted in Assembly sessions. Next year should be a record in eugenic history. International gatherings are being organized : (a) by the French eugenists to coincide with the International Population Congress in Paris ; (b) by German eugenists with the support of the Reich in Berlin as a convenient halting place on the way to (c) Moscow, where the occasion of the International Congress of Genetics will also, it is hoped, be utilized as an occasion for prosecuting further organization of eugenic movements (this latter opportunity is still somewhat vague). The I.F.E.O. resolved to do its part in encouraging support for all these.

It was decided that the Presidential term of the Federation should be four years. It was a self-denying ordinance, for it entailed the resignation of Professor Ernst Ruedin under whose statesmanlike guidance the group has made considerable progress—indeed never has the federation previously been so vigorous and so much alive, doubtless in response to a world awakening. Professor Ruedin was immediately elected Honorary Vice-President together with Dr. Alfred Ploetz ; he with Major Darwin and Dr. Mjöen (also elected honorary vice-president) is a *doyen* of our science in Europe and was the first to make an international move.

That the presidency is now recognized as no sinecure was evidenced by the difficulty in securing a successor to Ruedin. There were five nominees who all brought eloquent reasons for refusing the task. Hence the acceptance by Dr. Torsten Sjöegren of the post was acclaimed with sincere gratitude. His name is already so well known from his writings that we confidently expect the friendly support of eugenists in all countries for our work.